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Millennium Development Goals Target is Fast Approaching



With the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) target date of 2015 fast approaching, world leaders came together at the United Nations Headquarters in New York this month to reaffirm the commitments made to slash poverty, hunger and disease and achieve universal primary education.

Exactly ten years ago, the United Nations member states, along with leading development institutions, committed their nations to a new global partnership known as the United Nations Millennium Declaration.

The document set out eight time-bound development goals:

1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
2. Achieve universal primary education
3. Promote gender equality and empower women
4. Reduce child mortality rate
5. Improve maternal health
6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases
7. Ensure environmental sustainability
8. Develop a global partnership for development

Much progress has been made, but as heads of state, development leaders and civil society advocates agree, there is much more to be done. The Millennium Development Goals Report 2010, released in June, highlighted a number of successes, but at the same time noted a lack of adequate progress on many of the Goals.

Notably, Millennium Development Goal #6 aims to halt and begin to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS by 2015. Unfortunately, with 3 million new infections worldwide each year, 15 million in need of AIDS medication, and only 3 million with access to this life-saving treatment, resources need to drastically increase over the next five years.

The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria (GFATM) is the largest multi-lateral investor in the fight against AIDS, and as such it is critical that countries keep their funding promises. To maintain, as well as expand, its life-saving programs in poor countries, the GFATM is in need of \$20 billion for year 2011-2013, against which current pledges made fall far short. As the biggest donor and self-proclaimed "world leader in the fight against AIDS," advocates are urging the US government to continue its leadership by committing its fair share of \$6 billion over three years, which will in turn set the bar for other donor countries to follow. Anything less threatens the very lives of millions more men, women and children around the world.

Welcomed by all was UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon's announcement of the Global Strategy for Women and Children's Health. With pledges of more than \$40 billion over the next five years, the Global Strategy calls for a bold and coordinated effort to save the lives of millions of women and children. "We know what works to save women and children's lives, and we know that women and children are critical to all of the MDGs," the UN Secretary-General said.

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This is true, but so also is the fact that HIV infection rates are currently outpacing the number of those placed on treatment and AIDS is the leading cause of death for women of reproductive age around the world. Without Millennium Development Goal 6, without universal access to AIDS treatment and a reversal in HIV infections, it can be well argued that Millennium Development Goals 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7 and 8 are an impossible dream.

Next week sees the re-convening of many of the same UN member nations here in New York at the Global Fund's Voluntary Replenishment Meeting. Will we fund the Fund? Will we reach the Goals?

Watch this space....

--Amanda Lugg

News & Updates

Sisterhood Through Sewing

It's Wednesday afternoon and the sound of whirring has already started. Scissors, thread, yarn and patches of brightly colored fabric lay strewn across the table. Theodora's hands and needles move effortlessly as she knits and purls a hat and booties. Fatou is putting the finishing touches on a pillow she has been working on for the past two weeks. Sounds of work fill the air, but even more importantly are the sounds of conversation and support. All of the women in this group are bonded not only by friendship, but also by their HIV positive diagnosis.

The group has been meeting for over a year and Tembeni Fazo, African Services' Peer Counselor, feels that it has been invaluable to the women. "The women have something to be proud of," says Tembeni, "and are becoming empowered by the feeling of self-reliance and creativity. The ability for the women to come to a calm and pressure free environment allows them to open up to one another and share their experiences and feelings about living with HIV."

Thanks to African Services' Independent Living Skills (ILS) program, classes like this are possible. We recognize that community plays a central role in African culture and identity. Life's challenges are shared and resolved with the help and support of friends. The ILS program--and this sewing club in particular--facilitates clients' sharing while they engage in a fun and skill building activity. It offers a safe pace for the women to relate freely to their peers who have a cultural connection.

For the first time since their creation, the group held a small sewing exhibition at the African Services headquarters. From beautifully adorned purses, to pillows, and children's wear the women put on a show. Unsurprisingly, within an hour everything on display had been sold.

For those that missed it, worry not, as the women are planning on showcasing their work again in early December...just in time for the holidays! They are also taking orders, and are able to do custom tailoring jobs. For more information you can contact Tembeni Fazo, Peer Counselor (tembenif@africanservices.org).

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Here are a few pictures from the exhibit:



Various Creations on display



Co-Executive Director, Kim Nichols shows off her new purchase



Beautifully crocheted blankets



Vibrant Fabric dresses

African Services will keep you updated on the next exhibition, and we hope to see you there in support of these amazing talented and strong women.

African Services Gets New Additions

African Services Committee continues to expand as we move into Fall. Get to know the new additions to the African Services family:



Kate Stinson is an attorney with the legal services program, providing advocacy and individual representation for survivors of gender-based violence. She works primarily in the areas of immigration, asylum, and domestic violence. Prior to joining African Services, Kate was an intern with American Civil Liberties Union, the Special Court for Sierra Leone, and the AIRE Center - a human rights legal services organization in London, UK; she also worked as a crisis intervention volunteer and support group facilitator at a sexual assault center in Montreal, Canada. Kate holds a BA in political science from McGill University, a Masters in International Relations from Oxford University, and a JD from Columbia Law School. She is from Toronto, Canada, and speaks French.

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Alka Dev is the Director of Program and Business Strategy at African Services and is responsible for guiding and overseeing the strategic planning, fundraising, new program development and quality assurance processes. Prior to her appointment at African Services, Ms. Dev worked with global health organizations for over a twelve years, overseeing program management and implementation in tuberculosis control, reproductive health, childhood blindness and primary care. She has worked with UNDP, HealthRight International, Helen Keller International and Family Health International. She holds a Masters in Public Health From Johns Hopkins University and is currently enrolled as a doctoral student at the Graduate Center of City University New York. Originally from India, Alka speaks Hindi, in addition to English.

African Services' Why Stand Campaign Nominated for Mashable Award



Our **Why Stand** campaign has been nominated for the 2010 Mashable Awards in the category of Best Creative Social Good Campaign...and we need YOU!

The Mashable Awards celebrate major innovations and achievements in the digital and social media landscape by companies, people and projects via an open community-nominated voting platform. Millions of votes will be cast...and we hope yours will be one of them. Click [here](http://www.whystand.org) and place your vote to help rocket us to the Top 5! Learn more about the campaign here: www.whystand.org.

Click [here](#) to place your vote! (You must log in to Facebook or Twitter to vote!)

Policy & Advocacy Update

The DREAM Act May Be Just That...a Dream

As speculation about the midterm elections gains momentum against the backdrop of the economic crisis, many politicians have tried to push talk of immigrant rights to the side. Immigrant rights advocates, however, have not lost focus on the issue, and are joining together to achieve their primary goal, comprehensive immigration reform for the 12 million undocumented immigrants living in the United States. On September 15, 2010, civic leaders and immigrations rights activists from across the country converged on Washington, D.C. to call for reform and an end to the plight of millions of immigrants. African Services Committee was there to represent the African immigrant community.

The event brought special attention to the issue of immigrant youth. According to current reports, over 65,000 children who were brought to this country, graduate from high school every year. However, because of their illegal immigration status they are denied access to higher education.

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"The situation that these young people face is morally unacceptable and legally unjustifiable. We are punishing these children for acts committed by their parents, and barring them from educating themselves and becoming productive members of society," says Bakary Tandia, African Services' Policy Advocate.

Thus enters the *Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors Act*, otherwise known as the *DREAM Act*. The DREAM Act was originally proposed to the US Senate in 2001, and re-introduced more notably this year by Senator

Harry Reid. The Dream Act would create a road to citizenship and education for thousands of children. The act stipulates that the child must have arrived in the United States before the age of 16, show proof of residence for at least 5 consecutive years, be between the ages of 12 and 35, have graduated from an American high school or obtained a GED, and be of "good moral character."

The DREAM Act, along with the repeal of *Don't Ask, Don't Tell*, was incorporated into the 2010 National Defense Authorization Act.. However, much to the chagrin of immigration activists, the Senate filibuster of the bill was maintained in a 56-43 vote (60 votes were needed to stop the filibuster and continue progress of the bill).

Despite the ill-decision on the part of the senate, immigration communities and rights organizations are committed to fighting for the fundamental rights of all immigrants. Most recently, on September 22, 2010, Richard Durbin (D-Ill.) and Richard Lugar (R-Ind.) re-introduced the bill to the Senate floor; keeping the dream alive.

"The real solution to the immigration crisis is comprehensive immigration reform with a path to citizenship," says Tandia. "The immigrant populations is a vibrant and indispensable part of the American economic engine, and their contributions to help strengthen the American economy are needed now more than ever."

--Bakary Tandia

African Services Applauds US National Institute of Health (NIH) as First to License Patents with Medicines Patent Pool



The US National Institute of Health (NIH) has become the first patent-holder to license patents to the Medicines Patent Pool (MPP), established by UNITAID this year.

In so doing, the NIH and the US Government have taken a large stride forward in validating the HIV Medicines Patent Pool, and raised a leadership challenge to others within the pharmaceutical industry to follow suit.

"This contribution [to the MPP] marks a significant advance in the effort to provide affordable life-saving HIV medication to those in low and middle-

income countries. This move is a necessary step in meeting the goal of universal access to HIV treatment, and we hope will be an indication of the Obama administration's ongoing commitment to putting patient rights above patent rights," says Kim Nichols, Co-Executive Director of African Services Committee and UNITAID alternate board member.

The NIH agreement allows for royalty- free access to nine patents issued or pending on the protease inhibitor darunavir. Darunavir is an antiretroviral (ARV) drug approved by the FDA in 2006. It has proven effective in treating HIV/AIDS in people who have begun to develop resistance to older treatments. (story cont. on pg. 6)

This license alone will not provide the right to produce or sell darunavir or any other specific medicine. Other patent holders would need to license their patents with the MPP in order to clear a path for production of darunavir and other affordable, generic HIV medicines.

African Services Committee, along with other organizations, calls on pharmaceutical companies, such as Gilead, Abbott, Merck, Pfizer, and Johnson and Johnson, as well as universities and other publicly-funded research institutions, to follow the lead of the NIH and jump into the patent pool.

"Every day I meet people who need access to cheaper and better medicines for HIV and AIDS, whether it's small children or adults whose medicines are no longer working for them," said Nelson Otwoma, Director of Network of Persons Living with HIV/AIDS in Kenya and UNITAID board member. "We ask that companies step up and collaborate with the MPP so that we can quickly see more affordable, easy-to-use pills getting into people's mouths."

"The license underlines the U.S. Government's commitment to the Medicines Patent Pool and its goal to increase the availability of HIV medicines in developing countries," said NIH Director Francis S. Collins, M.D., Ph. D. " We are now discussing licensing to the MPP and other patents that could have a positive impact on the treatment of HIV/AIDS."

This is one of a sequence of actions necessary to achieve universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support. Next week country representatives will meet in New York to solidify funding promises to The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB, and Malaria (GFATM), which requires \$20 billion between 2011 and 2013 in order to meet its lifesaving targets for people in developing countries. It is critical that donor nations double their funding commitments to maintain their fair share of the contributions. It is only through adequate funding that programs like this will continue to thrive.

"The patent pool has seen its first success today, in what we hope is a long stream of successes," says Nichols. "The more companies that contribute, the closer we will be to achieving the goal of universal access."

--Stephanie Kaplan

Fun in the City Staff Recommendations

Kim Nichols, Co-Executive Director recommends...

Harlem Stage

The Gatehouse, 150 Convent Avenue (@ 135th Street)
Thursday, October 21st 5:00 pm - 7:30 pm



This new open mic series for teens is a safe, uncensored space for poets, spoken word artists, emcees, scholars and activists to share their powerful and important voices. Run by youth for youth, this monthly event is outfitted with DJs, hosts and featured poets.

Tickets: (at door only) \$3 teens, \$5 adults
Click [here](#) for more information.